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STAN LEE PRESENTS:
SOULS IN TORMENT!
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IT IS A TIME OF GREAT MYSTIC UPHEAVAL, A GREAT MALIGNANT POWER HAS REACHED INTO OUR WORLD--BRINGING DESTRUCTION TO A SMALL SUBURBAN COMMUNITY AND DRAWING TWO OF THE FAMED FANTASTIC FOUR INTO HADES! *
AND ONLY ONE MAN DARES TO ENTER THIS INFERNAL REALM AND FACE ITS VILE OVERLORD...ITS MASTER OF EVIL... MEPHISTO!
WHO DARES...?!?
COME NOW, MY OLD FOE. WE HAVE MET IN BATTLE SO MANY TIMES... SURELY YOU RECOGNIZE ME?
DOCTOR STRANGE!
*AS SEEN IF F.F.™ 276-277.

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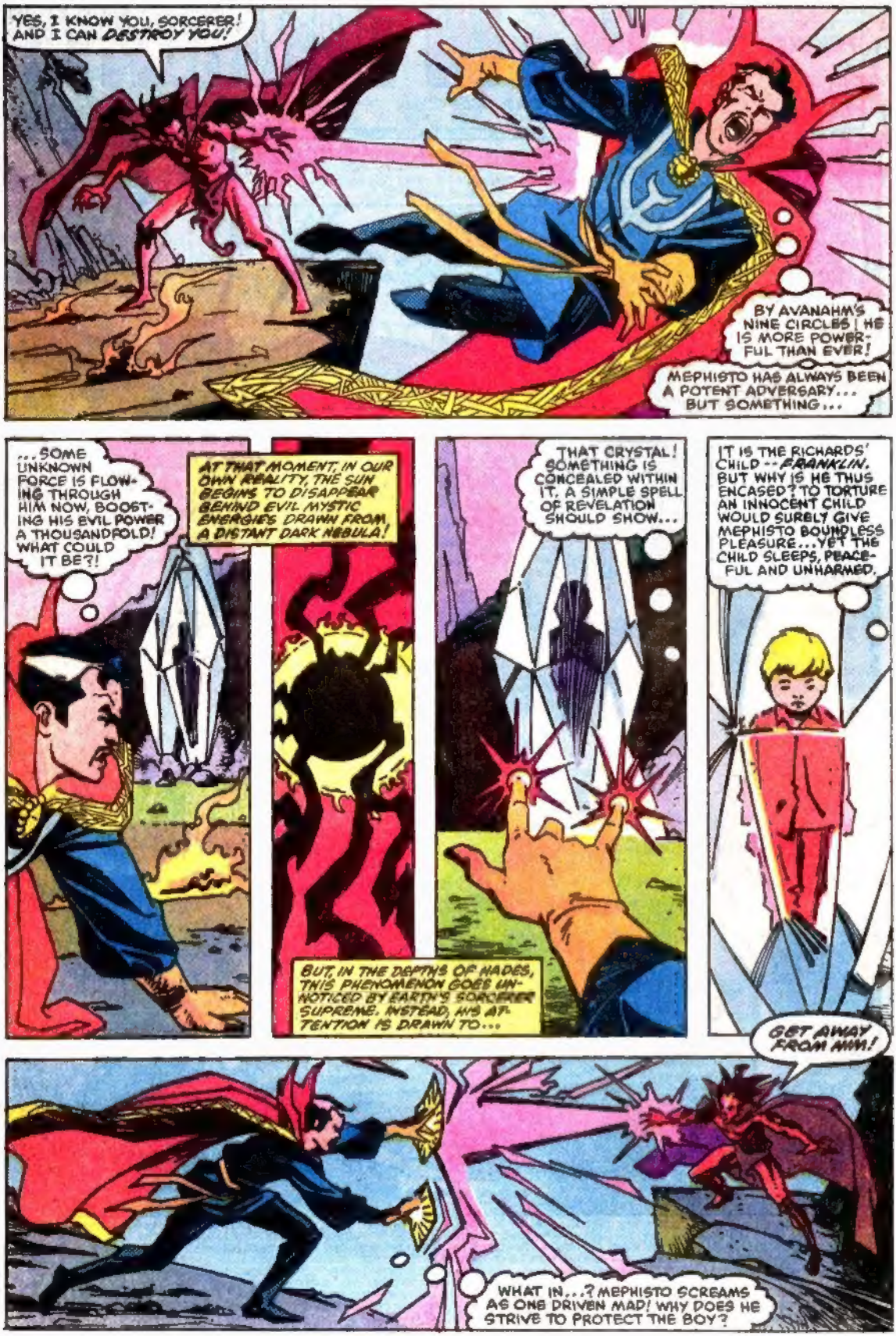
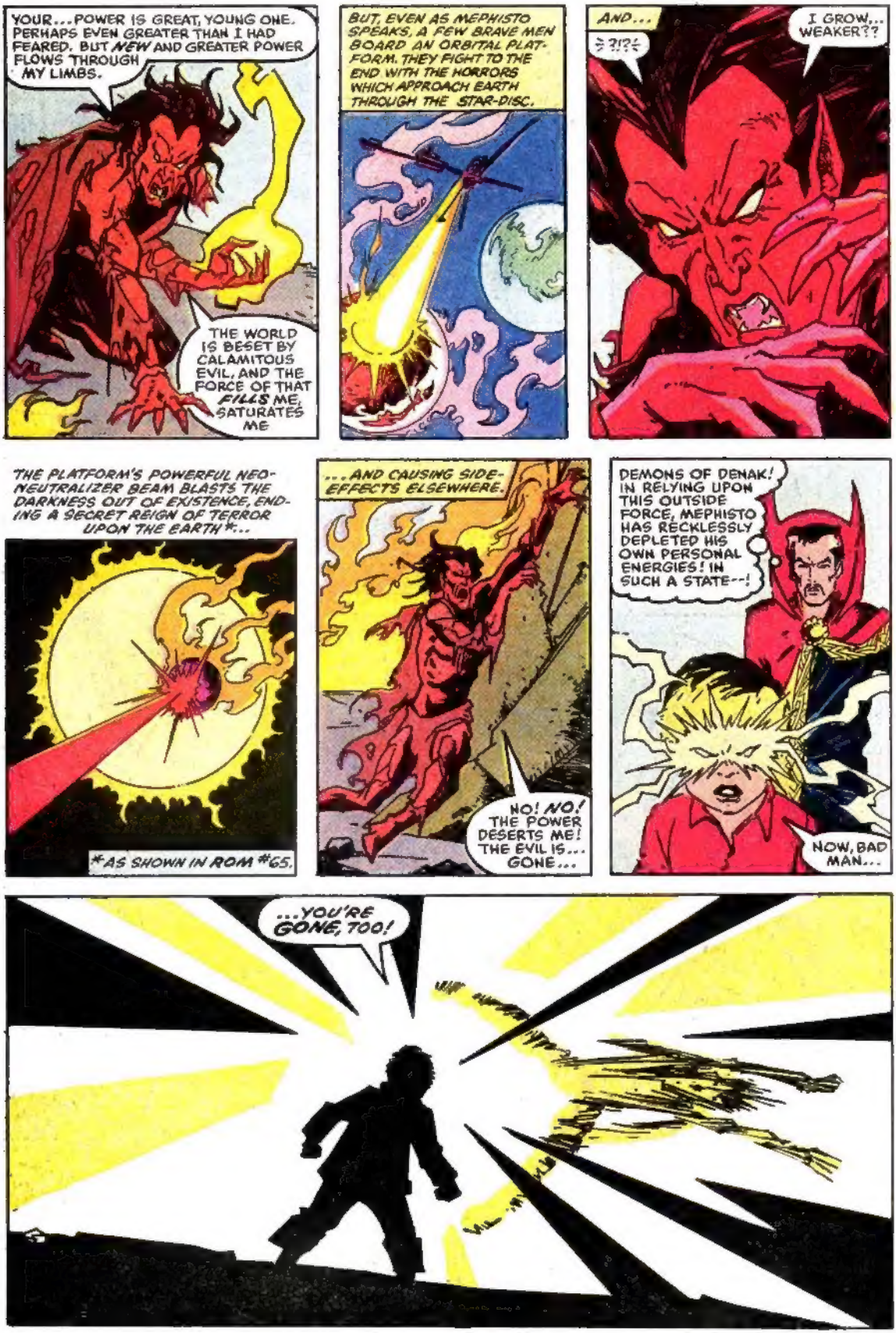
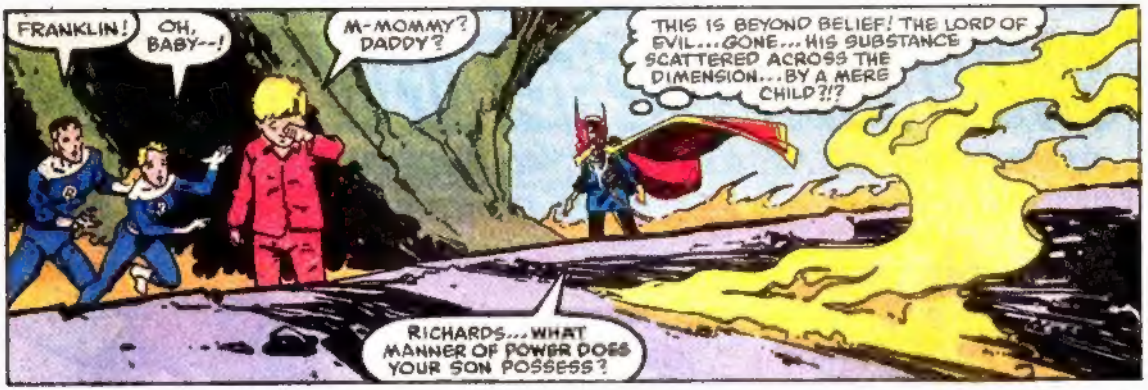
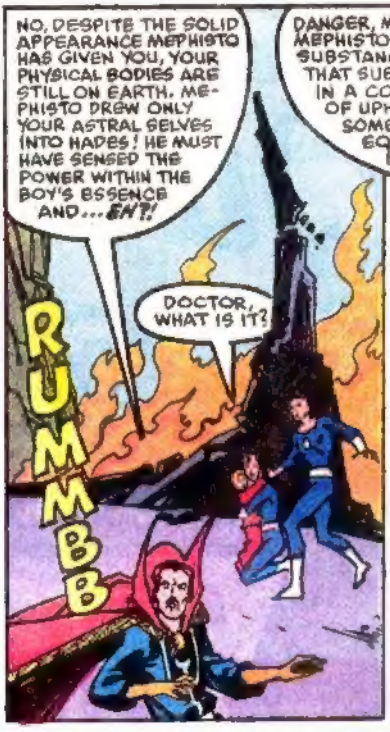

YES, I KNOW YOU, SORCERER! AND I CAN DESTROY YOU!
BY AVANAHM'S NINE CIRCLES! HE IS MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER!
MEPHISTO HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POTENT ADVERSARY... BUT SOMETHING...
...SOME UNKNOWN FORCE IS FLOWING THROUGH HIM NOW, BOOSTING HIS EVIL POWER A THOUSANDFOLD! WHAT COULD IT BE?!
AT THAT MOMENT, IN OUR OWN REALITY, THE SUN BEGINS TO DISAPPEAR BEHIND EVIL MYSTIC ENERGIES DRAWN FROM A DISTANT DARK NEBULA!
BUT, IN THE DEPTHS OF HADES, THIS PHENOMENON GOES UNNOTICED BY EARTH'S SORCERER SUPREME. INSTEAD, HIS ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO...
THAT CRYSTAL! SOMETHING IS CONCEALED WITHIN IT. A SIMPLE SPELL OF REVELATION SHOULD SHOW...
IT IS THE RICHARDS' CHILD -- FRANKLIN. BUT WHY IS HE THUS ENCASED? TO TORTURE AN INNOCENT CHILD WOULD SURELY GIVE MEPHISTO BOUNDLESS PLEASURE...YET THE CHILD SLEEPS, PEACEFUL AND UNHARMED.
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
WHAT IN...? MEPHISTO SCREAMS AS ONE DRIVEN MAD! WHY DOES HE STRIVE TO PROTECT THE BOY?

ACROSS THE FIERY CAVERN, REED RICHARDS ASKS HIMSELF THE SAME QUESTION AND COMES TO A STARTLING CONCLUSION...
MEPHISTO IS AFRAID OF FRANKLIN!
DOCTOR STRANGE! FRANKLIN IS THE KEY! FREE FRANKLIN!
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THIS CAN BE, DR. RICHARDS... BUT I WILL OF COURSE COMPLY!
OH!
WHERE...AM...I? I... REMEMBER...BAD LADY 'TACKING MOMMY AN' DADDY...AN' THE BIG RED MAN BROKE OUR HOUSE!
THE CHILD IS DISORIENTED ...HELPLESS. EXCELLENT!
IT SEEMS YOUR PLAN MUST FAIL, REED RICHARDS! WATCH, THEN, AS YOUR CHILD IS TORN TO SHREDS...
NO...
WITHIN THE MIND OF FRANKLIN RICHARDS RESIDES IMMENSE, PERHAPS LIMITLESS POWER. IT IS A POWER WHICH HAS BEEN LOCKED AWAY BEHIND CAREFULLY SET PSYCHIC BLOCKS...
...UNTIL THIS MOMENT!
NO!


YOUR...POWER IS GREAT, YOUNG ONE. PERHAPS EVEN GREATER THAN I HAD FEARED. BUT NEW AND GREATER POWER FLOWS THROUGH MY LIMBS.
THE WORLD IS BESET BY CALAMITOUS EVIL, AND THE FORCE OF THAT FILLS ME, SATURATES ME
BUT, EVEN AS MEPHISTO SPEAKS, A FEW BRAVE MEN BOARD AN ORBITAL PLATFORM. THEY FIGHT TO THE END WITH THE HORRORS WHICH APPROACH EARTH THROUGH THE STAR-DISC.
AND...
?!?!
I GROW... WEAKER??
THE PLATFORM'S POWERFUL NEO-NEUTRALIZER BEAM BLASTS THE DARKNESS OUT OF EXISTENCE, ENDING A SECRET REIGN OF TERROR UPON THE EARTH*...
*AS SHOWN IN ROM #65.
...AND CAUSING SIDE-EFFECTS ELSEWHERE.
NO! NO! THE POWER DESERTS ME! THE EVIL IS... GONE...
DEMONS OF DENAK! IN RELYING UPON THIS OUTSIDE FORCE, MEPHISTO HAS RECKLESSLY DEPLETED HIS OWN PERSONAL ENERGIES! IN SUCH A STATE--!
NOW, BAD MAN...
...YOU'RE GONE, TOO!

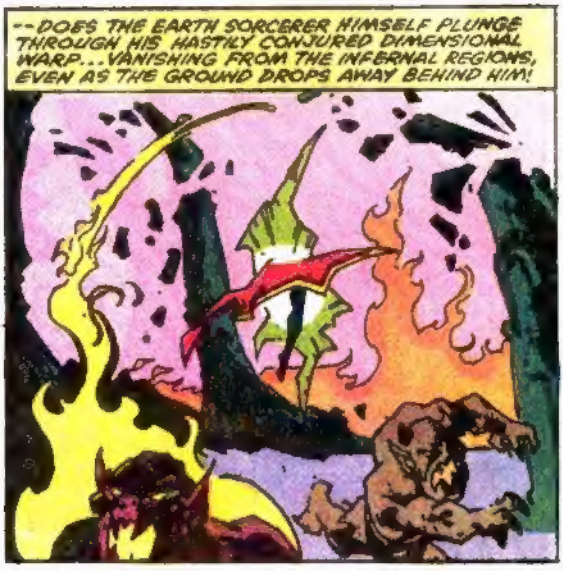

FRANKLIN!
OH, BABY--!
M-MOMMY? DADDY?
THIS IS BEYOND BELIEF! THE LORD OF EVIL...GONE...HIS SUBSTANCE SCATTERED ACROSS THE DIMENSION...BY A MERE CHILD?!?
RICHARDS...WHAT MANNER OF POWER DOES YOUR SON POSSESS?

I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO ACCURATELY GAUGE IT, STRANGE. HE'D ACQUIRED MENTAL BLOCKS AGAINST USING HIS POWER, BUT THOSE BLOCKS ARE IN HIS PHYSICAL BRAIN. AND HE--WE--AREN'T TRULY PHYSICAL, ARE WE?


NO, DESPITE THE SOLID APPEARANCE MEPHISTO HAS GIVEN YOU, YOUR PHYSICAL BODIES ARE STILL ON EARTH. MEPHISTO DREW ONLY YOUR ASTRAL SELVES INTO HADES! HE MUST HAVE SENSED THE POWER WITHIN THE BOY'S ESSENCE AND...EH?!
RUMMBB
DOCTOR, WHAT IS IT?

DANGER, MRS. RICHARDS! MEPHISTO RULED THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THIS REALM. THAT SUBSTANCE WILL BE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF UPHEAVAL UNTIL SOME SORT OF EQUILIBRIUM IS REACHED.
YOU MUST GET OUT OF HERE--

--AND BACK INTO YOUR PHYSICAL BODIES AT ONCE! HURRY NOW--THROUGH HERE!
NOT UNTIL THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S FIRST FAMILY ARE OUT OF DANGER--


--DOES THE EARTH SORCERER HIMSELF PLUNGE THROUGH HIS HASTILY CONJURED DIMENSIONAL WARP...VANISHING FROM THE INFERNAL REGIONS, EVEN AS THE GROUND DROPS AWAY BEHIND HIM!

FOR DAYS ON END, THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF HADES IS SHAKEN FROM WITHIN. EVEN THE DENIZENS OF THIS FOUL PLACE HAVE NEVER ENDURED SUCH HELLISH CHAOS!
STONE WHICH HAS STOOD FOR CENTURIES CRUMBLES IN AN INSTANT, OR ERUPTS IN SHOWERS OF SULFUROUS MAGMA! FROM THE MIDST OF ONE SUCH ERUPTION, A LONE FIGURE STIRS --
--AND IS FREE! HOW LONG IT HAS BEEN SO ENTRAPPED, IT DOES NOT KNOW.
IT ONLY KNOWS THAT IT IS FREE...
... AND THAT IT WILL ALLOW NOTHING TO TAKE THAT FREEDOM AWAY!
NOTHING!

FOR A MOMENT, AS IF LISTENING TO A DISTANT CALL, IT PAUSES ... BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT.
AND THEN IT DISAPPEARS INTO THE OUTER FRINGES OF HADES!
WEEK'S LATER, AT THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF DOCTOR STRANGE...
OOOH! $#@%...
...I MISPLACED THE DECIMAL POINTS IN FIVE DIFFERENT PLACES! NOW I'LL HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN!
AT THIS RATE, I'LL NEVER GET THE MONTHLY BOOKS BALANCED!
SARA? WHAT IS THE MATTER?

I'M JUST HAVING ONE OF THOSE DECADES, DOC! NOTHING A NEW BRAIN WOULDN'T CURE.
YOU'RE A GREAT BUSINESS MANAGER, SARA, BUT A TERRIBLE LIAR. YOU'VE BEEN UPSET FOR SOME TIME NOW. WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU?
IT'S... PERSONAL... NOTHING FOR YOU TO BE CONCERED ABOUT.
SARA, I WAS YOUR FRIEND LONG BEFORE I BECAME YOUR EMPLOYER. I WANT TO HELP, IF I CAN.
IT'S ABOUT YOU AND WONG... ISN'T IT?
I... YES... IT IS.
AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I HAVEN'T HAD AN UNREQUITED LOVE SINCE GRADE SCHOOL. I GUESS IT SHOWS HOW UNPREDICTABLE LOVE CAN BE... I MEAN, I CERTAINLY NEVER EXPECTED TO FEEL THIS WAY...
"...WHEN I FIRST STARTED WORKING HERE, WONG AND I PRACTICALLY HAD AN ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP!"
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU, WONG! WHAT IS SO HARD ABOUT ASKING FOR A RECEIPT?
I APOLOGIZE, MS. WOLFE, BUT I HAVE BEEN SERVING THE MASTER FOR SOME TIME, AND I HAVE NOT BEEN IN THE HABIT--!

UH-HUH, AND THAT'S WHY DOC'S HAD TO PAY EXTRA IN TAXES THE LAST FEW YEARS!
I SHALL ENDEAVOR TO DO BETTER, MS. WOLFE.
THANKS, I'D APPRECIATE IT. AND KNOCK OFF THE "MS. WOLFE" STUFF--I'M SARA, OKAY?
AS YOU WISH... SARA.
"BUT IF OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP GOT OFF TO A SLOW START, OUR CONCERN FOR YOU SOON BROUGHT US CLOSER TOGETHER. YOU REALLY HAD US WORRIED AFTER CLEA LEFT YOU.
"FOR A FULL WEEK, YOU WOULDN'T EAT... YOU'D HARDLY EVEN SPEAK.* IT WAS A FRIGHTENING THING TO SEE... AND THE TWO OF US HAD TO PULL TOGETHER TO GET THROUGH IT. AND A FUNNY THING HAPPENED...
*IN DOC #55.
"...I FOUND MYSELF ENJOYING WONG'S COMPANY MORE AND MORE. THERE'S AN INTERESTING MAN UNDER THAT INSCRUTABLE FACADE... AND HE SEEMED TO BE DEVELOPING AN INTEREST IN ME.
"BUT THAT INTEREST WENT OUT THE WINDOW WHEN THOSE THREE ORIENTAL MONKS SHOWED UP ON THE DOORSTEP.* AT FIRST, I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST GLAD TO SEE SOME PEOPLE FROM HIS OLD CORNER OF THE WORLD.
*IN ISSUE #66.

"BUT AFTER THEY'D LEFT..."
UH, WONG, I HAVE DOC'S PAPERWORK PRETTY MUCH IN ORDER... AND I'M SURE HE WON'T BE NEEDING A "FAITHFUL MAN-SERVANT" FOR THE REST OF THE DAY...
...HOW ABOUT THE TWO OF US TAKING IN A MOVIE?
NO, SARA. THIS MUST NOT BE.

WONG? WHAT'S THE MATTER? I WAS JUST SUGGESTING--!
I KNOW, BUT AS WITH OUR HONORED GUESTS, SOME OF US HAVE DUTIES IN THIS LIFE.

"HE REFUSED TO SAY MORE. FOR THE LONGEST TIME, HE JUST SHUT ME OUT. I STARTED TO THINK THAT MAYBE I'D OFFENDED HIM IN SOME WAY

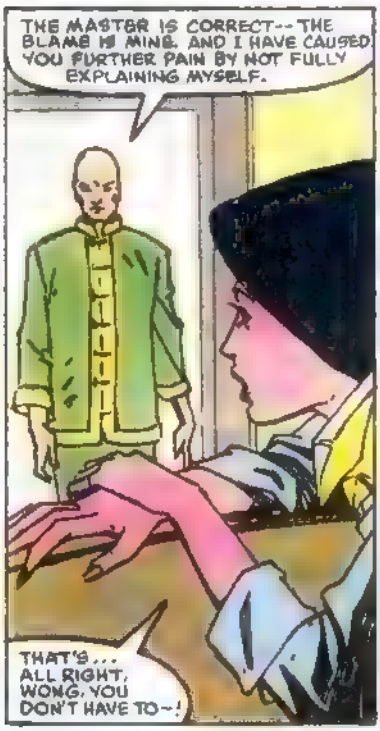
"IT WASN'T UNTIL YOU WERE AWAY IN THE DARK DIMENSION, THAT HE FINALLY OPENED UP A LITTLE..."
SARA, I HAVE DISTANCED MYSELF FROM YOU OF LATE, BUT I DID NOT WISH TO.
I... HAVE GROWN FOND OF YOU SINCE YOU CAME TO WORK FOR THE MASTER.

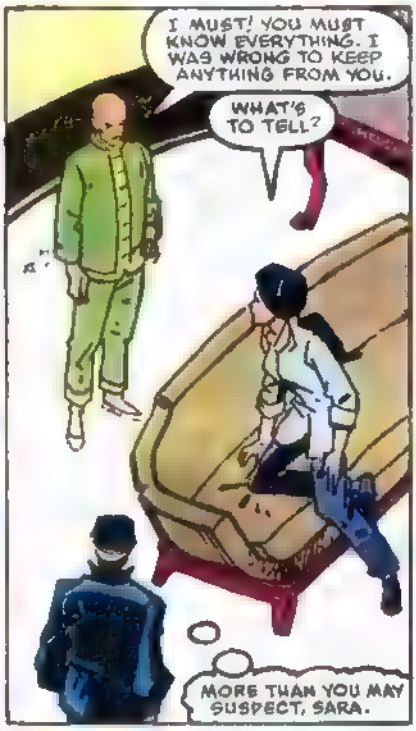
HEY, THE FEELING'S MUTUAL. YOU MUST KNOW THAT!

I DO. BUT WE MUST NOT ALLOW THIS TO GO ANY FURTHER.
BUT WHY--?
BECAUSE I AM PROMISED TO ANOTHER!
YOU MEAN.. YOU'RE ENGAGED TO SOMEONE?
I BELIEVE THAT IS THE TERM, I... SARA... I WISH I COULD EXPLAIN, BUT...

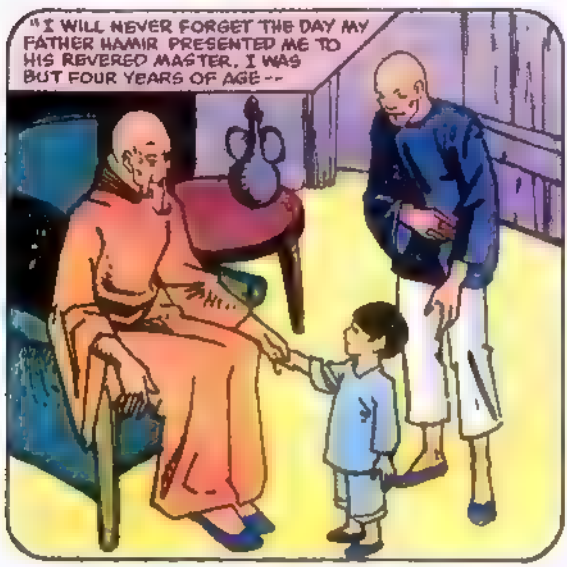
IT'S OKAY. I CAN UNDERSTAND IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, WONG. MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST FORGET IT... AND GO BACK TO BEING... FRIENDS.
AS YOU WISH.

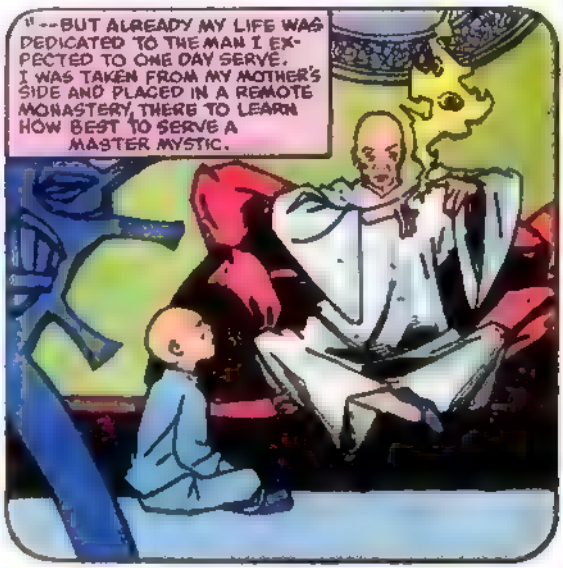
...SO, FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PUT THE WHOLE MESS OUT OF MY HEAD.
BUT I CAN'T. I FEEL LIKE SUCH A FOOL.
SARA...YOU'RE NOT TO BLAME FOR THIS.


THE MASTER IS CORRECT--THE BLAME IS MINE. AND I HAVE CAUSED YOU FURTHER PAIN BY NOT FULLY EXPLAINING MYSELF.
THAT'S... ALL RIGHT, WONG. YOU DON'T HAVE TO--!

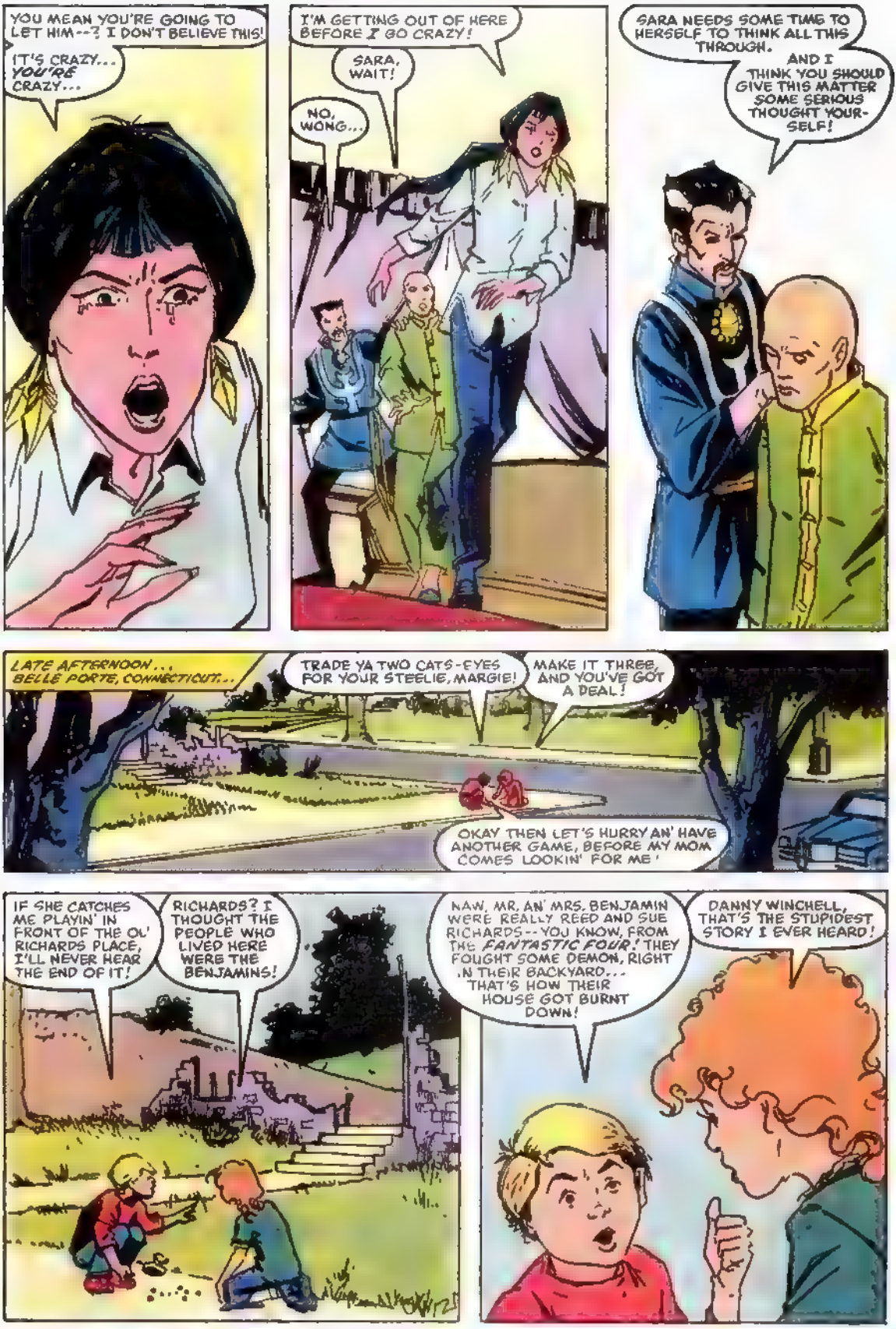

I MUST! YOU MUST KNOW EVERYTHING. I WAS WRONG TO KEEP ANYTHING FROM YOU.
WHAT'S TO TELL?
MORE THAN YOU MAY SUSPECT, SARA.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN TO SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW THE WAYS OF MY FAMILY. FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, THE FIRST-BORN MALES OF OUR LINE HAVE SERVED THE MATERIAL NEEDS OF MYSTICS--
--AND FOR THE LAST TEN GENERATIONS, THE MYSTIC WE SERVED WAS EARTH'S PAST SORCERER SUPREME... THE LEGENDARY ANCIENT ONE!

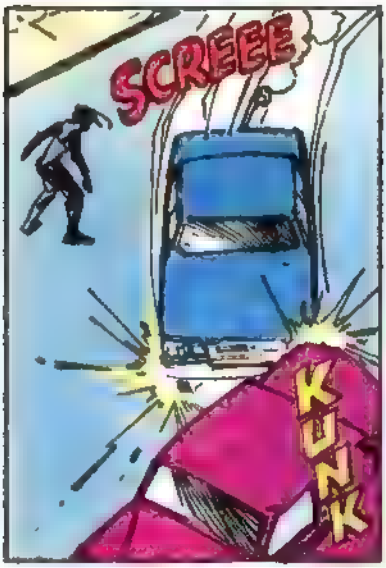

"I WILL NEVER FORGET THE DAY MY FATHER HAMIR PRESENTED ME TO HIS REVERED MASTER. I WAS BUT FOUR YEARS OF AGE--


"--BUT ALREADY MY LIFE WAS DEDICATED TO THE MAN I EXPECTED TO ONE DAY SERVE. I WAS TAKEN FROM MY MOTHER'S SIDE AND PLACED IN A REMOTE MONASTERY, THERE TO LEARN HOW BEST TO SERVE A MASTER MYSTIC.

"DO NOT THINK I WAS TOTALLY ISOLATED FROM MY FAMILY. THEY WERE ALLOWED TO VISIT FROM TIME TO TIME.
"AND ONCE, SHORTLY AFTER MY TENTH BIRTHDAY, MY FATHER BROUGHT WITH HIM A YOUNG COUPLE--AND A MARRIAGE PACT WAS MADE BETWEEN OUR FAMILIES.
"WHEN I REACHED MANHOOD, THE ANCIENT ONE SENT ME HERE, TO SERVE HIS DISCIPLE, DR. STRANGE. I WAS THE FIRST OF MY LINE TO COME TO AMERICA, BUT THAT WAS ONLY FITTING...
"...FOR MY NEW MASTER WAS THE FIRST AMERICAN TO BECOME SORCERER SUPREME!
"BUT IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE I RECEIVED WORD FROM MY HOMELAND THAT THE COUPLE OF MY FATHER'S CHOOSING HAD AT LAST BIRTHED A DAUGHTER."
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT ...YOU WERE ENGAGED TO A WOMAN WHO HADN'T EVEN BEEN CONCEIVED?!
THAT HAS BEEN MY FAMILY'S CUSTOM, SARA.
WHEN MY BRIDE COMES OF AGE, OUR MARRIAGE WILL BE CONSUMMATED AND MY LINE CONTINUED.
AND I THOUGHT MY CHEYENNE ANCESTORS HAD SOME SCREWY TRADITIONS! DOC, YOU'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING... TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM!
I KNOW THESE CUSTOMS SEEM PECULIAR TO YOU, SARA ...AND, INDEED, I WOULD NEVER CHOOSE THEM FOR MYSELF. BUT THEY ARE THE WAYS OF WONG'S FAMILY--
--AND IF HE WISHES TO FOLLOW THEM, WE MUST RESPECT HIS WISHES.


YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO LET HIM--? I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
IT'S CRAZY... YOU'RE CRAZY...
I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE BEFORE I GO CRAZY!
SARA, WAIT!
NO, WONG...
SARA NEEDS SOME TIME TO HERSELF TO THINK ALL THIS THROUGH.
AND I THINK YOU SHOULD GIVE THIS MATTER SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT YOURSELF!
LATE AFTERNOON... BELLE PORTE, CONNECTICUT...
TRADE YA TWO CATS-EYES FOR YOUR STEELIE, MARGIE!
MAKE IT THREE, AND YOU'VE GOT A DEAL!
OKAY THEN LET'S HURRY AN' HAVE ANOTHER GAME, BEFORE MY MOM COMES LOOKIN' FOR ME!
IF SHE CATCHES ME PLAYIN' IN FRONT OF THE OL' RICHARDS PLACE, I'LL NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT!
RICHARDS? I THOUGHT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE WERE THE BENJAMINS!
NAW, MR. AN' MRS. BENJAMIN WERE REALLY REED AND SUE RICHARDS--YOU KNOW, FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR! THEY FOUGHT SOME DEMON, RIGHT IN THEIR BACKYARD... THAT'S HOW THEIR HOUSE GOT BURNT DOWN!
DANNY WINCHELL, THAT'S THE STUPIDEST STORY I EVER HEARD!

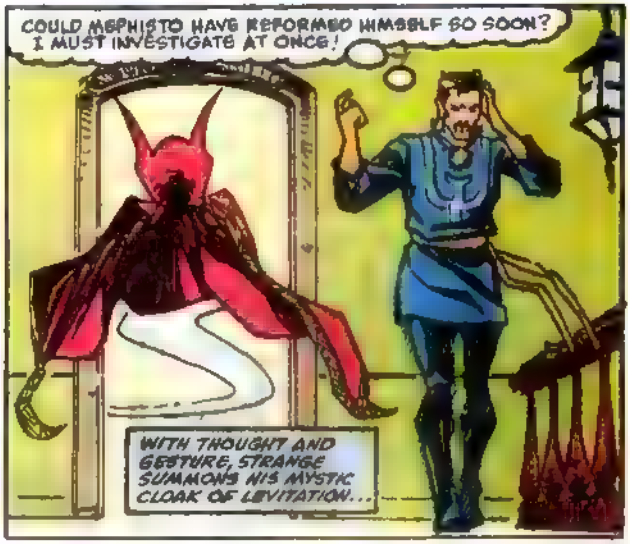
IS NOT! IT'S TRUE! MY DAD GOT THE WHOLE STORY FROM SERGEANT HULME!
WELL, EVEN IF THE BENJAMINS WERE THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THEY WOULD'A BEEN ATTACKED BY DOCTOR DOOM OR SOMEBODY LIKE THAT! EVEN YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER--
--THAN TO BELIEVE IN DEMONS!"
ONLY SOMEONE LIKE THAT DUMB OL' MRS. CHALMERS WOULD... BELIEVE ...IN...
HOLY GEEZ--!
MOMMMM!!!
FOR WEEKS, THE CRAGGY FIGURE HAD BEEN SEEKING ESCAPE FROM THE HADEAN DEPTHS.
NOW, SUDDENLY, IT FINDS ITSELF IN A VERY DIFFERENT SORT OF PLACE

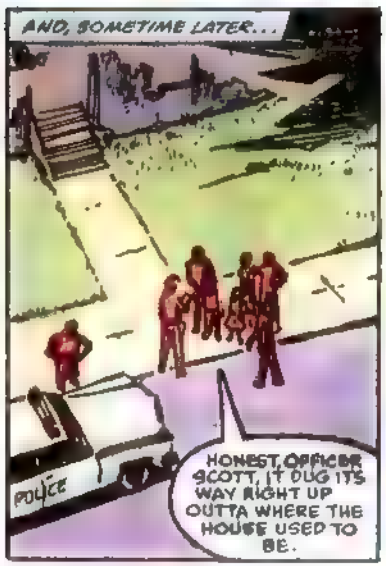

SCREEE
KUNK

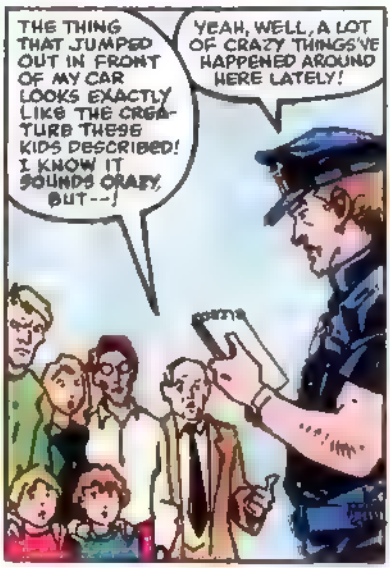
CONFUSED AND DISORIENTED, THE CREATURE TURNS AND BOLTS BACK ACROSS THE RAVAGED PROPERTY...
...DISAPPEARING INTO THE DEEPENING TWILIGHT.

MY INSURANCE COMPANY'S NEVER GONNA BELIEVE THIS.

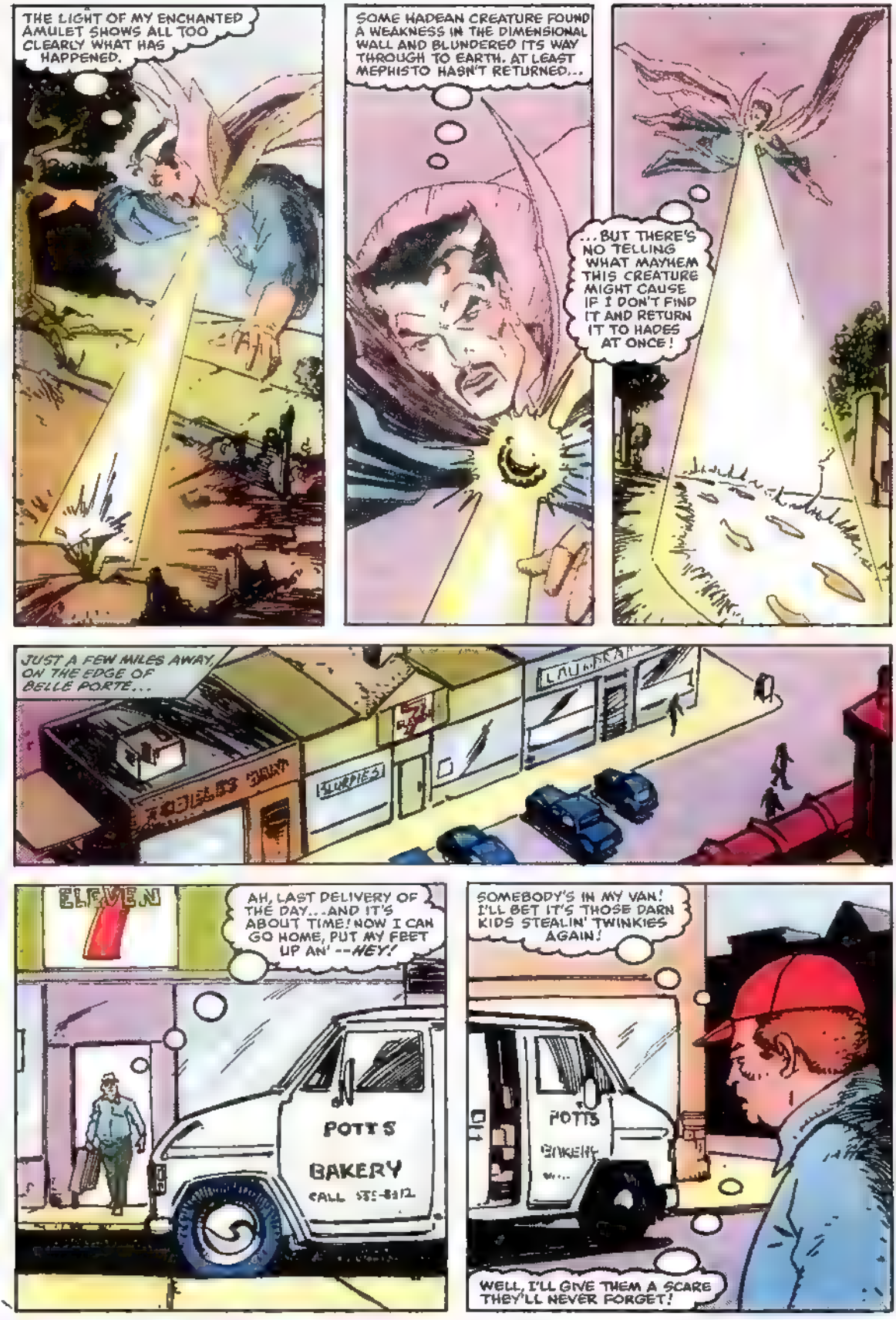
WHILE, BACK IN NEW YORK...
)UNNGH!(SOMETHING OF GREAT MYSTIC POWER HAS BROKEN THROUGH TO OUR REALITY! THIS IS MUCH LIKE THE DISTURBANCE I SENSED JUST LAST MONTH... THOUGH NOT AS PAINFULLY INTENSE.


COULD MEPHISTO HAVE REFORMED HIMSELF SO SOON? I MUST INVESTIGATE AT ONCE!
WITH THOUGHT AND GESTURE, STRANGE SUMMONS HIS MYSTIC CLOAK OF LEVITATION...

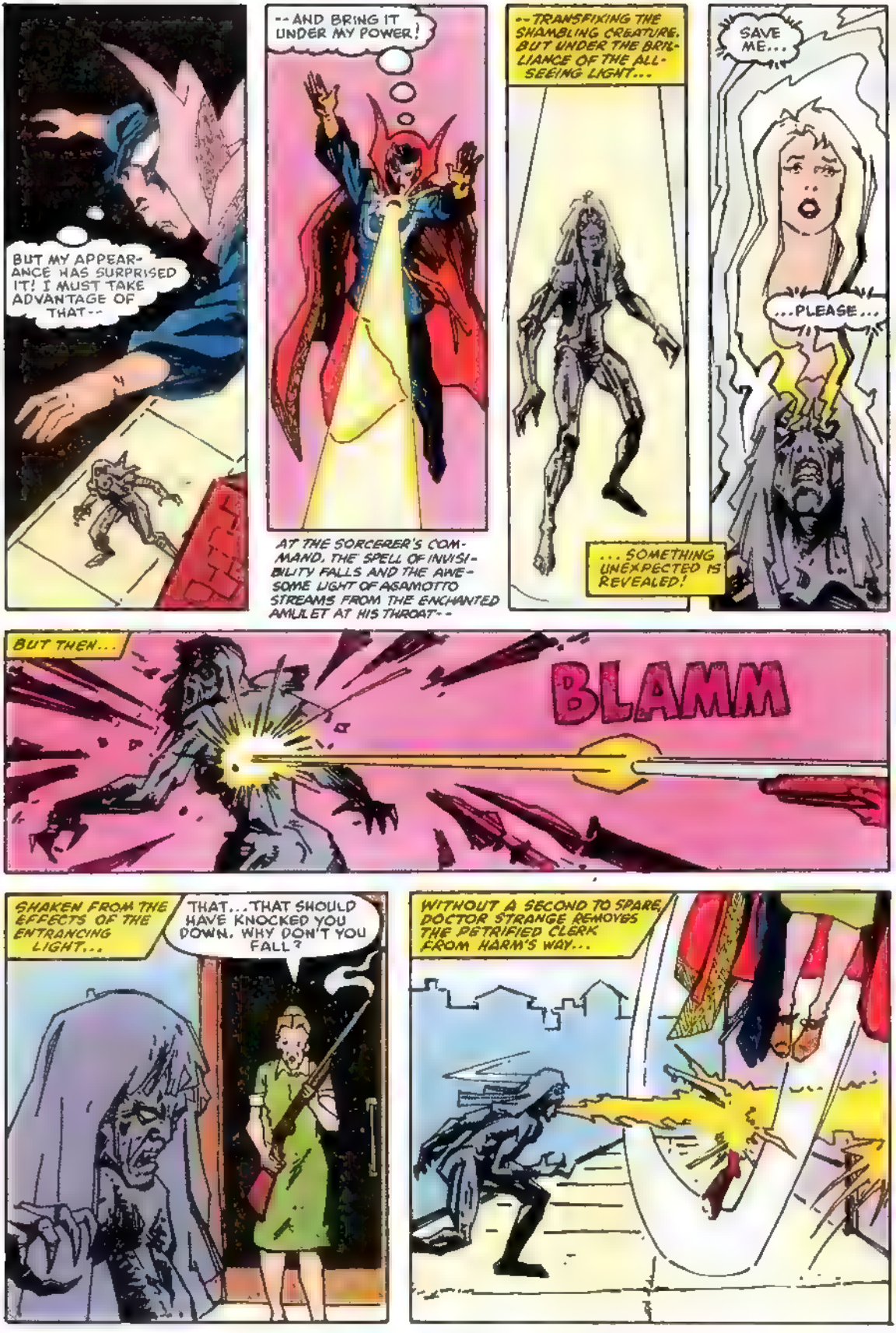

AND, SOMETIME LATER...
POLICE
HONEST, OFFICER SCOTT, IT DUG ITS WAY RIGHT UP OUTTA WHERE THE HOUSE USED TO BE.

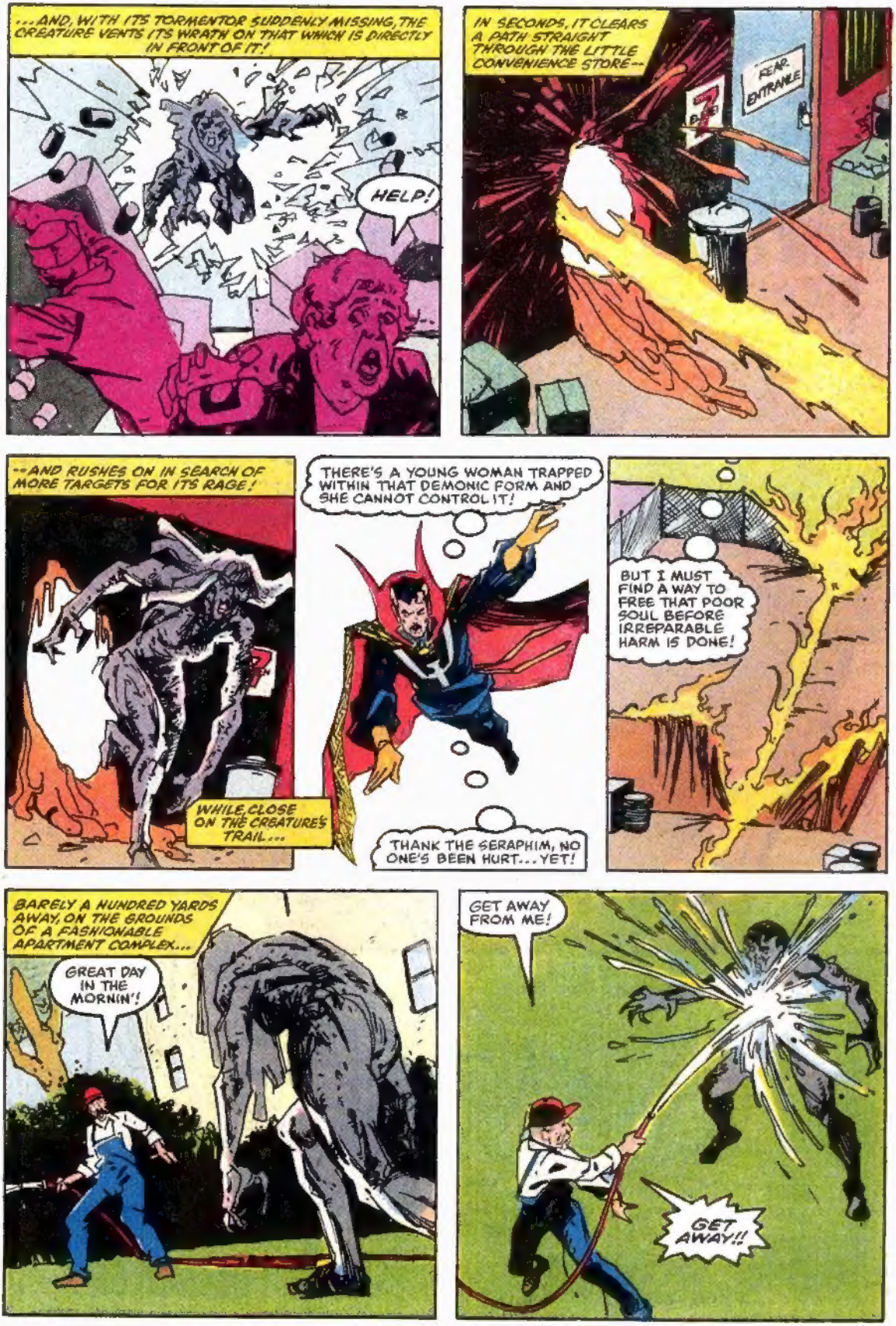

THE THING THAT JUMPED OUT IN FRONT OF MY CAR LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE CREATURE THESE KIDS DESCRIBED! I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT--!
YEAH, WELL, A LOT OF CRAZY THINGS'VE HAPPENED AROUND HERE LATELY!

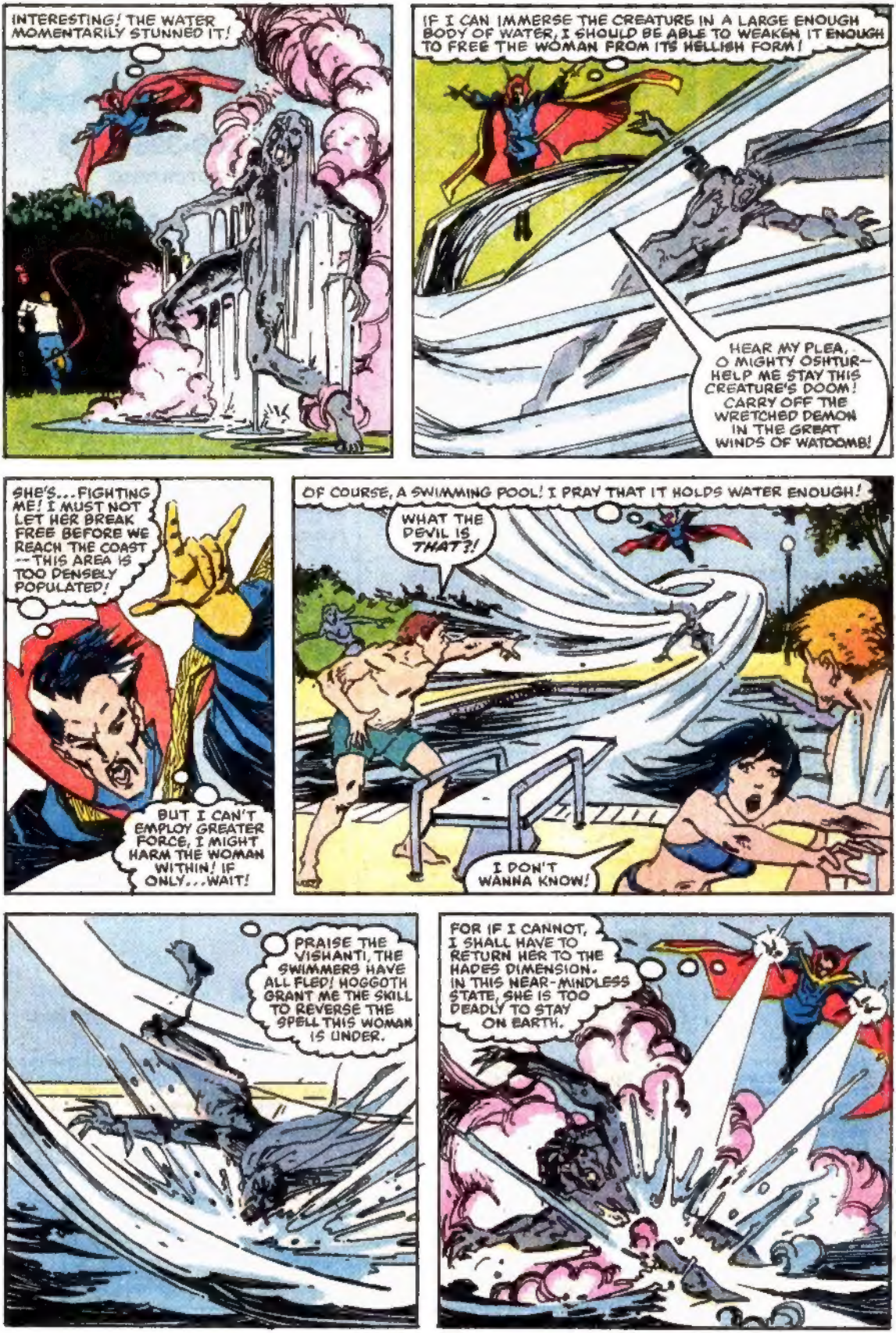
OVERHEAD, HIDDEN BY A SPELL OF INVISIBILITY, THE MYSTIC MASTER HAS HEARD ALL...
I WANT AN APB ON A SEVEN-FOOT-TALL CREATURE ...GRAY AND ROCKY.
STOP LAUGHING, THIS IS SERIOUS!


THE LIGHT OF MY ENCHANTED AMULET SHOWS ALL TOO CLEARLY WHAT HAS HAPPENED.
SOME HADEAN CREATURE FOUND A WEAKNESS IN THE DIMENSIONAL WALL AND BLUNDERED ITS WAY THROUGH TO EARTH. AT LEAST MEPHISTO HASN'T RETURNED...
...BUT THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT MAYHEM THIS CREATURE MIGHT CAUSE IF I DON'T FIND IT AND RETURN IT TO HADES AT ONCE!
JUST A FEW MILES AWAY, ON THE EDGE OF BELLE PORTE...
ELEVEN
AH, LAST DELIVERY OF THE DAY...AND IT'S ABOUT TIME! NOW I CAN GO HOME, PUT MY FEET UP AN' --HEY!
POTT'S
BAKERY
SOMEBODY'S IN MY VAN! I'LL BET IT'S THOSE DARN KIDS STEALIN' TWINKIES AGAIN!
POTTS
WELL, I'LL GIVE THEM A SCARE THEY'LL NEVER FORGET!

ROARRR!!
NOW, YOU LITTLE PAINS, I'M...
...GONNA... TEACH...
...YOU E
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO OMAR? I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM MOVE THAT FAST IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE WORKED HERE!
YOU'D THINK HE... UH?
OMIGOD!
SOMEWHERE DEEP WITHIN THE CREATURE, A FRAGMENT OF A MEMORY STIRS. THERE IS SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT THIS PLACE.
PUZZLED, IT STOPS TO PONDER THIS FEELING...
...WHEN ANOTHER, STRONGER SENSATION SUDDENLY DRAWS ITS GAZE SKYWARD...
BY THE VISHANTI, DESPITE MY CLOAKING SPELL, IT SEES ME!


BUT MY APPEARANCE HAS SURPRISED IT! I MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT--
--AND BRING IT UNDER MY POWER!
AT THE SORCERER'S COMMAND, THE SPELL OF INVISIBILITY FALLS AND THE AWESOME LIGHT OF ASAMOTTO STREAMS FROM THE ENCHANTED AMULET AT HIS THROAT--
--TRANSFIXING THE SHAMBLING CREATURE. BUT UNDER THE BRILLIANCE OF THE ALL-SEEING LIGHT...
...SOMETHING UNEXPECTED IS REVEALED!
SAVE ME...
...PLEASE...
BUT THEN...
BLAMM
SHAKEN FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE ENTRANCING LIGHT...
THAT...THAT SHOULD HAVE KNOCKED YOU DOWN. WHY DON'T YOU FALL?
WITHOUT A SECOND TO SPARE, DOCTOR STRANGE REMOVES THE PETRIFIED CLERK FROM HARM'S WAY...


...AND, WITH ITS TORMENTOR SUDDENLY MISSING, THE CREATURE VENTS ITS WRATH ON THAT WHICH IS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF IT!
HELP!
IN SECONDS, IT CLEARS A PATH STRAIGHT THROUGH THE LITTLE CONVENIENCE STORE--
REAR ENTRANCE
--AND RUSHES ON IN SEARCH OF MORE TARGETS FOR ITS RAGE!
WHILE, CLOSE ON THE CREATURE'S TRAIL...
THERE'S A YOUNG WOMAN TRAPPED WITHIN THAT DEMONIC FORM AND SHE CANNOT CONTROL IT!
THANK THE SERAPHIM, NO ONE'S BEEN HURT... YET!
BUT I MUST FIND A WAY TO FREE THAT POOR SOUL BEFORE IRREPARABLE HARM IS DONE!
BARELY A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, ON THE GROUNDS OF A FASHIONABLE APARTMENT COMPLEX...
GREAT DAY IN THE MORNIN'!
GET AWAY FROM ME!
GET AWAY!!


INTERESTING! THE WATER MOMENTARILY STUNNED IT!
IF I CAN IMMERSE THE CREATURE IN A LARGE ENOUGH BODY OF WATER, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO WEAKEN IT ENOUGH TO FREE THE WOMAN FROM ITS HELLISH FORM!
HEAR MY PLEA, O MIGHTY OSHTUR— HELP ME STAY THIS CREATURE'S DOOM! CARRY OFF THE WRETCHED DEMON IN THE GREAT WINDS OF WATOOMB!
SHE'S...FIGHTING ME! I MUST NOT LET HER BREAK FREE BEFORE WE REACH THE COAST --THIS AREA IS TOO DENSELY POPULATED!
BUT I CAN'T EMPLOY GREATER FORCE, I MIGHT HARM THE WOMAN WITHIN! IF ONLY...WAIT!
OF COURSE, A SWIMMING POOL! I PRAY THAT IT HOLDS WATER ENOUGH!
WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?!
I DON'T WANNA KNOW!
PRAISE THE VISHANTI, THE SWIMMERS HAVE ALL FLED! HOGGOTH GRANT ME THE SKILL TO REVERSE THE SPELL THIS WOMAN IS UNDER.
FOR IF I CANNOT, I SHALL HAVE TO RETURN HER TO THE HADES DIMENSION. IN THIS NEAR-MINDLESS STATE, SHE IS TOO DEADLY TO STAY ON EARTH.

RISE AND SURGE, YE ROILING WATERS-- RAGE AND SWIRL AND RISE AGAIN!
THAT THE THREE WHO ARE VISHANTI MIGHT RESTORE THE ONE WITHIN!
SHE DISAPPEARS BENEATH THE WAVES. HAS MY SPELL WORKED, OR HAVE I DOOMED HER?
ONE FINAL, DYING PILLAR OF FLAME... I HAD NOT EXPECTED THIS.
SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG!
SECONDS LATER...
COULD I HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN? THE CREATURE HAS ALREADY SHRUNK TO THREE-QUARTERS OF ITS SIZE--
--AND ITS ROCKLIKE HIDE YIELDS TO HUMAN FLESH!
THANK HOGGOTH, SHE LIVES!

HOURS LATER, BACK IN HIS SANCTUM...
SHE MUST HAVE BEEN HELD CAPTIVE IN THAT HORRIFIC BODY FOR SOME TIME. IT'S A MIRACLE THERE ARE NO LINGERING AFTER-EFFECTS ON HER BODY.
MASTER, HOW IS SHE?
CONSIDERING HER ORDEAL, IN REMARKABLE HEALTH... PHYSICALLY.
WHERE...
...WHERE AM I?
AMONG FRIENDS. I AM DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE.
CAN YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT WHO YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU'VE BEEN?
DOCTOR STRANGE... YES, I'VE HEARD OF YOU.
MY NAME IS TOPAZ-- I'M AFRAID IT'S THE ONLY NAME I'VE EVER KNOWN.
I WAS IN A PLACE... ANOTHER REALITY... CALLED HADES. I MUST HAVE ESCAPED, BUT...I'M NOT ALL HERE, AM I?
YOU REALIZE THAT?
I HAVE HAD CERTAIN POWERS, CERTAIN PERCEPTIONS ALL MY LIFE.
THEN KNOW YOU THIS, TOPAZ, DOCTOR STRANGE WILL NOT REST--
"--UNTIL WE FIND AND RESTORE THE MISSING HALF OF YOUR SOUL!"
TO BE CONTINUED!